

## VOLGA GERMAN FOODS

Volga Germans brought an interesting mixture of German and Russian foods with them to Kansas. The most common foods they ate were cabbage and meat, soup, sauerkraut, clabbered milk or sour cream, potatoes, bread, cheese, butter, and eggs. Almost all of the ingredients for their recipes were raised on their farms and in their vegetable gardens.

Food was important for more than just satisfying hunger. It was an important part of every celebration. Food and drink were served for almost any occasion. Offering someone food was an important gesture of friendship, just as today, inviting someone to dinner is a friendly, polite thing to do.

A description of a few of the special dishes that are still being served in Volga German households in Kansas follow. Recipes are included for those who might wish to try their hand at this special brand of ethnic cooking.

### Bierocks: a main dish

- 3 cups cabbage, chopped
- 2 cups onions, chopped
- $\frac{1}{2}$  lb. ground beef
- 1 T. bacon drippings
- 1 teaspoon salt
- $\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoon pepper
- Bread dough

Brown beef in bacon drippings for five min. Add cabbage and onions; cover and cook about 15 min. Add salt and pepper; cool to lukewarm. Roll dough about  $\frac{1}{4}$  inch thick; cut in squares, put filling on each square, pinch together and place pinched side down on greased pan. Let rise 20 minutes. Bake at 350 degrees for 20 minutes. Yield 8 servings.

KRAUT DUMPLINGS: vegetable dish

Boil about 2 cups homemade kraut or one can stor-bought kraut with a little piece of ham bone, leftover pork, or even a few weiners cut up. If you have no meat, use about 2 tablespoons of bacon drippings.

Add about a heaping teaspoon of sugar to the kraut. Make dumplings with 1 egg, about  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup milk, 1 teaspoon baking powder and a little salt. Beat together, then thicken until rather stiff with flour and drop into boiling kraut with spoon. Cook about 10 minutes and serve with mashed potatoes.

ROUND POTATO DUMPLINGS: vegetable dish

2 cups mashed potatoes  
3/4 cup fine bread crumbs  
2 eggs  
1/2 teaspoon minced onion  
1/4 teaspoon baking powder  
little salt  
flour enough to make a stiff dough

Form ingredients into balls about 1 1/4 inch in diameter. Drop into boiling salted water (salt to taste); cook about 8 minutes. Drain off water and pour some cream over them. Toast small bits of bread in butter and put on top for garnish. Dumplings may also be fried in butter until a light brown instead of using cream.

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SOUR SOUP: wedding dish

Take fresh beef, cut into small pieces, season with salt, bay leaves, celery, boil until done. Then season with sour cream. A lot of lean meat should be used to make the soup thick. Dumplings may be added to the soup.

KASSE NOODLES: main dish

2 cups flour  
2 eggs  
dash of salt  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup milk

Mix all together to form a smooth dough. Put on a floured board, separate into three parts, and roll out as noodle dough. Cut into 4-inch squares, and place a spoonful of filling in the middle of each square. Bring the corners together and pinch the edges to seal the filling inside. Boil in salt water for 4 to 5 minutes. Don't crowd. Melt butter or oleo and put over top. Sour cream is also good on top.

Filling:

12 oz. cottage cheese (dry)  
2 T. sour cream  
1 egg  
3 T. butter  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  slices of bread, cubed  
salt to taste

Fry bread cubes in 3 T. butter until brown. Mix all together and put in dough squares; 1 Tablespoon to a square. Use fruit or blackberries for a filling if you prefer.

Kuchen: dessert or coffee cake

Various Kuchens are made from bread dough or roll dough, as coffee cake is made, by the addition of different flavoring materials.

Sweet Roll Dough

Measure into mixing bowl:

$\frac{1}{2}$  cup warm water  
Add, stirring to dissolve:  
2 pks. active dry yeast

Stir in:  
 $1\frac{1}{2}$  cups lukewarm milk  
2 tsp. salt  
2 eggs  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup soft shortening  
5 cups sifted flour

Mix with spoon until smooth. Add enough remaining flour to handle easily; mix with hand. Turn onto lightly floured board; knead until smooth and elastic--about 5 min. Round up in greased bowl, greased side up. Cover with damp cloth. Let rise in warm place  $85^{\circ}$  until double--about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  hours. Punch down, let rise again until almost double. Divide dough for desired recipes. Put dough about  $\frac{1}{4}$  to  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch thick in square or oblong baking pan.

Schwartzbeeren Kuchen requires the following mixture spread on top just before baking in a slow oven.

1 qt. blackberries  
1 cup sugar  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour

Mix together; spread over dough. Top with 1 cup sugar,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup shortening, 1 cup flour mixed together to form a coarse, crumbly mixture. Sprinkle over the berries. Pumpkin mixed with a little sugar and cinnamon may be substituted for the berries. Other fruits may also be used, such as apricots, peaches, apples, cherries.

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KREBEL: dessert

4 eggs beaten  
2 T. butter, melted in cup; fill cup with evaporated milk  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  cup sugar  
1 tsp. vanilla  
 $\frac{1}{2}$  tsp. salt

4 cups flour

Mix ingredients with flour, one cup at a time. Roll out on floured board quite thin, and cut into 4-inch squares. Cut 3 slits in each square and fry in deep hot fat or oil until golden brown and crisp. Remove to soft paper towel and sprinkle with powdered sugar while they are still hot.

#### Watermelon Syrup

Scrape the inside red part of watermelon into kettle including seeds and juice. Cook this for 20 to 30 minutes. Then strain through thin cloth. (Several thicknesses of cheesecloth). Take 4 cups of strained juice and boil it down until it thickens and is light brown in color. Add 1 tablespoon sugar. Boil a little longer until it is a heavy syrup consistency. Stir while cooking as the syrup will easily stick to the bottom of the kettle.

Among some Volga German Kansans in Russell County, this syrup mixed with cream was used as a topping for a special kuchen eaten at Christmas. This syrup was also used to flavor bread dough.

Watermelon was a traditional garden fruit that Volga Germans brought with them to Kansas from Russia. They called watermelon aerbus and ate not only the pulp, but also roasted the seeds and ate them as a snack.

#### Sunflower Seeds

Sunflower seeds were a common snack among Russian-Germans. In South Dakota where numerous Russian-Germans settled, sunflower seeds are still referred to as "Russian popcorn."



## Project

### Making Sauerkraut

Background: Sauerkraut is a staple of the Volga German diet and of many other German ethnic groups. It is used in combination with meats, potatoes and other vegetables to make a variety of Volga German foods. In the days before refrigeration, it was important to preserve some green vegetables for use during the winter. Sauerkraut was a healthy, vitamin-filled addition to a diet that otherwise consisted mainly of starches, eggs, and dairy and meat products.

#### | Materials:

5-gallon crock

Old dinner plate large enough to fit down in the top of the crock

Wooden stomper (like large, old-fashioned potato masher) to use in compacting the shredded cabbage.

Kraut cutter or hovel for shredding cabbage

1 10 quart dishpan

25 lbs. of cabbage

$\frac{1}{2}$  lb. table salt

1 gal. jar filled with water

Directions: Shred cabbage fine into a 10 qt. dishpan. Put cabbage into crock, then put in a big handful of salt and stomp cabbage until you see juice cover the cabbage. Repeat this until all the cabbage is in the crock. Be sure cabbage is quite salty or it will turn black. Cover kraut with nice big cabbage leaves. Place plate in top of crock and jar of water on top of plate as a weight to keep the kraut in juice. Place in a cool dry place for about 3 to 4 weeks. Then seal in jars, heating lids till sealed in hot water. Lids will seal by placing jars upside down in pan of hot water.